

PALOUSE SCENIC BYWAY ROUTE EXTENSION

BRIEFING PAPER

Prepared for the
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING

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PURPOSE:

The purpose of this agenda item is to ask the Commission to adopt a resolution granting the request of the Palouse Scenic Byway Organization, the Whitman County Commissioners, the Towns of Rosalia and LaCrosse to extend the designation of Palouse Scenic Byway to the following four county roads:

- 1.) Old SR 195 from SR 195 passing through Rosalia to the Whitman County Line
- 2.) Hume Road between SR 27 and SR 195, leading to Steptoe Butte State Park
- 3.) Scott Road, the southwest entrance road to LaCrosse,
- 4.) Scharpenberg Road, the east entry to LaCrosse.

ACTION/OUTCOME:

This action will officially add the above county roads to the existing system of state routes that comprise the Palouse Scenic Byway.

BACKGROUND:

In early 2001, at the request of community activists in the Palouse region and staff from the state Department of Business and Tourism, WSDOT began working with local residents to explore the feasibility of marketing a “hub and spoke” system of routes in Whitman County as a scenic byway featuring the heritage of the Palouse landscape. By the end of 2002, after receiving formal application for the byway organization, WSDOT staff completed an extensive assessment process and forwarded a recommendation to designate the state route portion of the byway to the Transportation Commission. The Commission designated all or portions of SR 26, SR 27, SR 271 and US 195 as the Palouse Scenic Byway in December 2002, and the Legislature confirmed the designation in the 2003 session as per the requirements of RCW Chapter 47.39, the governing law.

DISCUSSION:

RCW Chapter 47.39 was revised in 1999 to allow local roads to participate in the Scenic Byways Program. The legislature reserved the right to have final approval of state

highways receiving designation, while delegating authority for designating local roads to the Transportation Commission.

The Palouse Byway organization had originally requested the above four county roads be included in the original byway designation. However, WSDOT staff and byway proponents agreed to defer designation of the county roads portion of the byway to a later date. The reason for this decision was the concern by WSDOT and byway proponents that mixing of designations by two different approval authorities would cause confusion and derail the entire process of designation.

Justification for Highways and Local Programs staff recommendation that these county roads now be added to the byway is as follows:

- These four county roads were included in WSDOT's assessment of criteria for the byway and exceeded requirements for designation.
- The byway organization has demonstrated broad based community support through written documentation.
- WSDOT has received letters requesting this designation from Whitman County's three commissioners, as well as the Towns of LaCrosse and Rosalia.
- Designation would allow the byway organization to compete for National Scenic Byway grant funding for eligible projects along these roads.

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt the resolution

For further information, contact:

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